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Armstrong, S. C.

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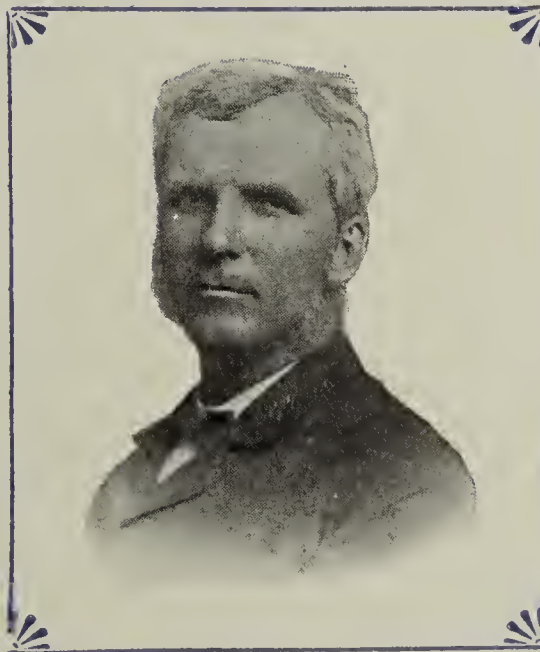
HAMPTON'S HERO

Armstrong S. C.

Ray

BORN ON HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

January 30, 1839



DIED AT HAMPTON

May 11, 1893



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Hampton's Hero

BY
ADA C. BAYTOP
CLASS OF '93

AN ORIGINAL POEM
READ AT THE NINTH TRI-ENNIAL REUNION
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JUNE 3RD, 1902

HAMPTON INSTITUTE PRESS,

HAMPTON'S HERO

O MUSE, take up thy tuneful lyre;
Of Christian Hero sing to me,
Whose word was truth, whose eyes flashed fire,
Whose deeds will long remembered be.
He toiled and fought for heavenly prize,
And that a race oppressed, downtrod,
And crushed by bondage long, might "rise
And shine and glory give to God."

Who is my Hero? Who his sire?
You ask me, Muse? Then let me say,
You cannot strike your tuneful lyre
To sing a greater hero's lay.
At the call of God his parents leave
Their home and friends; at his command
They make their home where wavelets weave
Foam chaplets for Hawaii's sands.

Where ocean breezes fan the cheek,
And flowers bloom, was their abode;
Where man did not his Maker seek,
Where songs were sung, but not to God.
There, 'neath Hawaii's sunny skies,
Where Nature laughs the flowers among,
Where glorious Summer never dies,
Was born the Hero of my song.

A call divine, an unseen force
Impelled him onward by its pow'r,
A fiery cloud to light his course,
A fount of strength for trials hour.
And when his college days were o'er,
And Williams crowned him as her son,
Forth from her walls he went to show
A life of battles fought and won.

When war with bloody fingers traced
 A line dividing North from South,
When men and brothers boldly faced
 The fury of the cannon's mouth,
My Hero pledged allegiance true
 To his beloved fatherland,
And with the bonny boys in blue
 Marched boldly forth, his sword in hand.

His country's call led him to tread
 A path of hardship, toil and care;
But the pow'r by which he had been led
 Crowned with success his efforts there.
And when the freedmen, contrabands,
 Desired to fight for Freedom, too,
Against the gallant Southern bands
 He led the dusky boys in blue.

And when around the camp-fires' glow,
 He heard them sing their cabin songs;
And heard them sing, so sweet so low
 The thrilling story of their wrongs ;
Those minor strains, so sad, so sweet,
 So full of longing for the day
When they should sit at Jesus' feet
 And toil and pain should pass away.

In those sad songs of sorrow born
 That floated on the breeze of night,
God's call within his ear resounds,
 And thus prepares him for a fight
More difficult than facing fire
 At country's call. Now he must face
The poisoned arrow of man's ire
 To help a crushed, despised race.



When by one stroke of Lincoln's pen,
By blood and fire, emblems twain,
Four million slaves were made free men,
And cleft for aye, their galling chain ;
My Hero laid his knapsack by,
Exchanged the musket for the pen,
And with the hope that God was nigh,
Began the work of saving men.

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As tempests lash the ocean's breast,
And waves leap high like steed uncurbed,
Yet just beneath the billows' crest
The ocean lies calm, undisturbed ;
So was my Hero calm, though long
The waves of strife around him roared ;
Though adverse winds with fury strong
Upon him all their vengeance poured.

My Hero was in purpose high
 Farsighted in his work and plan.
He hated wrong, and scorned a lie,
 And ever loved his fellow-man.
And as we see these buildings here
 With ivy wreathed, this spacious Hall,
The student faces bright and clear,
 We see his answer to God's call.

Not only on these grounds is seen
 His answer ; but his influence speaks
From happy homes, so neat and clean,
 From farms that sight the Rockies' peaks,
From homes which deck the Southland fair,
 As daisies gem the meadow green ;
From lives he saved from sad despair,
 In these his answer may be seen.

Who says my Hero's busy hands
Are folded now upon his breast?
That he no longer with us stands?
Who says my Hero takes his rest?
He lives! His voice is in our ears,
His foot-step is upon the stair.
"Hark! listen to the trumpeters"
Is wafted on the evening air.

In every breast beneath the "blue,"
His heart still pulsates full and strong,
Each dusky face reflects his true
And noble life; alas, not long.
New courage still his spirit givès,
And still the freedman's heart inspires
To nobler deeds, to better lives,
To broader aims, higher desires.



No more he speaks in church or hall
Of Hampton and the Negro's need,
But from their efforts comes his call,
And by their lives he speaks indeed.
Can you behold a "Washington"
And say the General's tongue is still?
For when you see what he has done
In him you see the General's will.

Thus lives my Hero; though no crown
Has ever pressed his snowy hair,
Nor laurel wreath was ever bound
Upon his brow so noble, fair;
Nor monument of granite stands
In memory of his deeds or life,
Yet in the sight of God and man
He was a Hero in the strife.

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O, that I had the voice to sing
 My Hero's well-deservéd fame !
O, that I had the power to bring
 More honor to his nòble name !
But I cannot. Therefore O, Muse,
 I ask that you will sing his praise ;
If you shall still my prayer refuse,
 Then others must their voices raise,

And sing as best they can a song
 Of him who nobly fought and won ;
Who suffered patiently and long,
 Who heard the Master's sweet " Well done. "
The Muse is silent, not a string
 Is sounding' neath her living touch ;
She opens not her lips to sing
 The praise of him I love so much.

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And, so my friends, I ask that you
 Will sing for me this glorious song
Sing we with loyal hearts and true,
 Sing we with voices sweet but strong,
Sing we by lives of purity,
 Of patience, truth, and fortitude ;
Sing we by lives unselfish, free,
 Sing we by lives of gratitude

Then will my Hero's praise be sung
 In sweeter tones than Muses sing.
Then other races, other tongues
 Shall to his name their honor bring.
Then will his life, so pure, so high
 Accomplish all that God did plan ;
Then will the ages as they fly
 Crown him the Hero and the Man.

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